

## Reducing risk in a business-critical project



### Client

SHL, a leading provider of online personality and capability assessments

### Goals

- ◆ Develop a new software architecture that would deliver more scalability and flexibility
- ◆ Minimise the business risks

### Charteris' Role

- ◆ Validate, monitor and check the software development through the project lifecycle
- ◆ Engage with the offshore development organisations to keep them focused on quality and delivery

### Results

- ◆ Greater confidence that the software will meet the needs of the business
- ◆ Reduced risk of project failure, due to adherence to best practice guidelines and strong technical governance
- ◆ Significant long-term value derived from Charteris-facilitated workshops on future-proofing the architecture and strategy

**With low prices and large numbers of resources, offshore organisations can be an attractive option for companies that need to undertake software development. But offshore projects are notoriously difficult to manage and are fraught with risks. Charteris worked with leading online services company SHL to help it direct the offshore development of its new software platform. By providing tight guidelines and frequent reviews, Charteris helped to improve quality in this business-critical project.**

SHL delivers and administers a large portfolio of online, multi-lingual tests that can be used to assess the personalities, skills and competencies of existing employees or the suitability of new candidates for job vacancies. The company has offices all over the world, from which it serves the needs of local and multi-national organisations. Its customer list features leading brand names across a wide variety of industry sectors.

In this industry - like many other service industries - software is a crucial part of the core business. Over a period of many years, SHL had invested in developing a bespoke software platform for delivering its tests over the Internet and then analysing and reporting back the results. However, SHL was experiencing strong growth and had concerns that its software platform might not be scalable enough to meet its future needs. The company also needed to speed up the processing of results, so that it could ensure a quicker turn around time for its customers.

It decided to develop a significantly refreshed software solution, based on Microsoft technologies, that would improve SHL's ability to offer faster services to a larger number of customers all over the world. After carrying out a thorough tendering and review exercise, SHL appointed three organisations to share the development project. As a result, the client had to manage multiple agreements and multiple offshore suppliers, and ensure that all of the parties involved worked to compatible specifications and timelines.

To help it address these challenges, SHL decided to appoint a firm of external strategic technology consultants. It carried out a formal and thorough tendering process and selected Charteris because of the firm's successful track record in managing large IT projects of this type, and deep knowledge of Microsoft architectures. Charteris also offers strong mediation and arbitration services, which SHL felt might be useful in the event of any dispute or issues with the offshore organisations.





“Based on an excellent level of service over the last 18 months, we now consider Charteris to be our strategic partner of choice when we need deep technical or architectural insight.”

**Andy Ross,**  
Chief Information and  
Technology Officer, SHL



### Meeting the needs of the business

Charteris' main responsibility was to review the software in development and make recommendations to help ensure that it met the needs of the business.

Very quickly, SHL derived significant extra value from Charteris-facilitated Visioning workshops, which focused on future-proofing the architecture and strategy.

“If the solution developed had been of poor quality or had failed to meet the requirements of the organisation, there would have been very serious and damaging implications for SHL's business,” says David Sharp, the Charteris Principal who led the engagement. “We had to help the client ensure that the solution developed was fit for purpose.”

First, Charteris reviewed and updated the enterprise architecture to help to make sure that it would support the non-functional requirements of the business. Then, the consultants checked the design documents. Finally, during the coding phase, Charteris conducted detailed checks of the code produced and carried out a series of in-project reviews and workshops. Charteris provided the offshore companies with guidance on how to adhere to best practices and helped to ensure that all of the companies involved in the project used a consistent and maintainable set of standards.

With this structured approach and attention to detail, Charteris was able to keep the project focused on the needs of the business. SHL had constant reassurance that the project was making effective technical progress and was able to sign off each stage of the development with greater confidence.

### Managing a high risk project

All IT projects and business investments carry a certain degree of risk. However, this project was riskier than many.

“The level of risk in this project was particularly high for a number of reasons,” says Sharp. “There were multiple development partners, two of whom were based in India, but this wasn't the only challenge. In addition, SHL was adding several significant new capabilities to its software, alongside the redevelopment of its software architecture. The client was also implementing the new software onto a new virtualised server environment.”

He continues: “Even discounting these complexities, the significant scale of the project alone made it high risk.”

By providing tight technical governance, Charteris helped SHL to manage the risks that it faced. The consultants helped the company to reduce the likelihood of potential problems with the code and kept the offshore developers focused.

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**Business specialists who speak IT**  
**IT experts who think business**



### About Charteris

Charteris delivers greater customer focus and business efficiency through seamless business and IT consulting. Our unique blend of 'business specialists who speak IT and IT experts who think business' ensures that clients receive seamless solutions that deliver competitive edge.

Leading public and private sector organisations draw on our deep experience to help them improve performance and reduce costs. Our services include **Customer Centric Business Change**, **Microsoft Dynamics** solutions and other advanced solutions based on the full spectrum of **Microsoft Technologies** and associated technologies.

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